



Envisaging Through Darkness – A Study on Marcus Sedgwick's

She Is Not Invisible

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Abstract

Disability literature deals with the plight of the people with disabilities. It can be physical, emotional, social and mental. It makes people to be aware of the problems of the disabled and encourages the society to be responsible to the needs of the disabled. In the novel *She Is Not Invisible*, Marcus Sedgwick explores the palpable condition of a blind girl Laureth who never loses her self-confidence. She proves to the society that her lack of sight does not slow down her spirit. Moreover, she encounters the world with her physical disability without bothering about her visual impairment. She leads her life on her own by radiating love, trust and faith. The present paper also examines about the disabled girl's faith and hope to overcome the hurdles of life with her blindness. Though she lives in a world of darkness with her physical blindness, she envisages a promising future of happiness and contentment.

Keywords:

Disability, blindness, Support, Provision.

Disability literature is about the disabled that helps them to express their knowledge and feelings to the world. Disability literature is not just for the well-being of the disabled but also for the rest of the world to acknowledge their life and struggles which they undergo and respond to them positively. According to Bowe, "our memories of these and other characters often become individuals in real life. Somewhere in the back of our mind we associate disabilities with sin, evil and danger" (np). Disabled people should not be underestimated by the society based on their appearance and deformity. The fact is that they are much talented than the



ordinary people. Disabled people show their exemplary talent in various fields. Gartner compares discrimination to racism in the below line, “Just as whites have imposed upon blacks, and men upon people who are disabled. These images have told us not only what is beautiful and right; they have also warned us that the image of disability is ugly and evil” (31).

Marcus Sedgwick is a British writer who was born in 1968, in England. He began his writing career in 1994. He had worked as a book seller and won many awards. He is much popular for his dark themes. As an illustrator and musician he began to write children's stories in 1994. He has been a writer in residence at Bath Spa university for three years. Marcus Sedgwick's *The Dark House* was published in 2002 and it was shortlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction prize. His novel *She Is Not Invisible* tells about the complex life of the impaired people who struggle to lead their life along with the society. The author also throws light on the theme of coincidence. This novel is set in England and New York. Throughout the novel, a sixteen year old blind girl, Laureth searches for her father in the New York city. She carries her seven year old brother along with her while searching for him. The only clue which is left with her is a personal diary written by her father himself. The guidelines in the book gives her proper guidance in finding her father. She encounters many dangerous situations. But her self-confidences and her hopeful journey eventually brings success to her. Even her mission is unknown to her mother, but she accomplishes her mission without physical vision. This story also deals with the relationship between father and daughter. Many people in the world suffer with various disabilities and disorders. Visual impairment is one such disability which is a hindrance for an individual even in doing their daily activities. They are neither able to see the beauty of the world nor appreciate it.

Visual impairment and the age related blindness lead the patients to lose their independence and loss of vision is considered as a burden. In an article “Blindness and Vision Impairment” published by World Health Organization, states how considerable amount of peoples are Impaired by distance vision “with regards to distance vision, 188.5 million people have mild vision impairment, 217 million have moderate to severe vision impairment, and 36



million people are blind”(1). In this world blind people are victimized by other people through ridicule and contempt. They are even forced to beg and never considered worthy for any job. But on the other hand "People with impaired vision experience these positive stereotypes regularly the content being characteristically sensory, artistic or intellectual" (Kirtley).

Laureth, who is the protagonist of the novel suffers many humiliation from her childhood because of her blindness. But she never considers it as a flaw or never feels inferior because of her blindness. On the contrary, she is aware of the reality that she is regarded as an invalid by others. In her childhood, when she was playing with her cousin she thought that she could do all the things which the other children of her age could. So she rides a bicycle without being conscious of her impairment and gets injured. Still, she considers it as a brave deed. Moreover she does not take it too seriously. She says, “Mum says my scar doesn’t look as big as it feels when I run my fingertip over it, and although I hate to admit it, it did make me more careful, that cycling thing. I wanted to go on doing everything everyone else does. But I’ve never got on a bike since then” (93).

When people questions her, whether she wants vision or not, she replies negatively. This makes her to think that she is comfortable with her blindness and she is even contented with the reality of her physique. But people never stop examining her blindness. Laureth’s disability is never an excuse for her to accomplish things with confidence. The world is invisible for her but not to her courageous mind. She neither bothers about her disability nor people who discourage her. But on the contrary, with her visual impairment she is able to cope up with the biggest hardship. She tells her brother that she can perceive where her father is, but she does not really know his whereabouts with her positivity and determination she cherishes a hope that somehow she could find her father. She opines, “In fact, I knew that what I had done was dangerous and I wondered how much trouble I would be in. But every time I thought about that I also thought about Dad”(151).

Also, when she comes to New York city in search of her father, she meets a man named Mr. Walker who knows her father. She imagines Mr. Walker to be a grownup man but, she



laughs in her mind when she finds that he is a little boy. She exclaims, “ 'Mr. Walker ? Michael Walker? oh, I’m sorry, but you sound like a child’. You called yourself Mr. Walker. I’m sorry. I thought you were an adult, that’s all”(137). She also goes to the hotel to find her father, but, he is not there. Then she searches him in a public library. There too she is disappointed by her father’s absence. Then her brother Benjamin enquires about her father's absence. Then Laureth confesses the truth that she does not know where her father is. Benjamin cries out of fear but Laureth consoles him by giving courage and hope. She never wants her blindness to be an instrument to gain sympathy from others. Hence, she tries her level best in concealing her blindness from other people. But most of the times she fails to conceal it. As a result Sam, the boy whom she meets in the airport maintains a distance from her, when he comes to know that she is blind.

Laureth faces humiliation in her childhood, which leaves a deep imprint in her mind. As a child, she goes with her mother to a sweet shop, where the shop keeper asks many questions about managing Laureth to her mother. Laureth feels humiliated. She says, "I suddenly thought it was as if she were the one who was blind, and couldn’t see me, not the other way around” (201). From then onwards, Laureth decides to conceal her disability to others.

People with disabilities cannot be compared with normal people. These people have their own merits and demerits. Towards the end of the novel, the protagonist makes use of the darkness in the room. Since she is used to darkness, she is able to escape from a stranger. Whereas, the stranger whose vision is perfect could not walk in the darkness as Laureth does. He falls from the stairs. This incident shows how Laureth's disability changes into an ability to move in darkness. Further, Laureth uses her sense of smell to escape from dire consequences. She escapes from the clutches of men who attempt to murder her. She says, “I smelled the smell of smoke. stale smoke, rancid and old like a ashtray breathing all over me and I knew we’d been followed” (256). Her world is very different from the world of ordinary people. She loves her father very much and much inspired by his writings. Her father has gone to New York for his business trip and it has been so long that he neither returns back nor picks up any of her phone



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calls. But her father has taught her how to stand alone and fight against all oddities that she encounters. She is remarkably talented, though she lives in a world of darkness, and when she gets a clue about her father she thinks that she can go there without anyone's help and find her father. Also, she does not bother about her physical impairment or practical difficulties. She listens and observes all things that happen around her. Further, among all her problems and physical disability as a blind, Laureth envisages a life of hope and contentment.

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